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"Miller, William Young" (1833). *1833*. 17.
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February 08, 2015 6:30AM

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Knox Countians in the Civil War: Knoxville's Henry H. Miller joins Zouaves

Editor's note: This is the first of two parts on Henry H. Miller of Knoxville.

Residing west of Knoxville, the Rev. William Young Miller, or W. Y., as he was known, was a prominent farmer and a large landowner. Miller graduated from Union College in New York in 1834. Continuing his education for the ministry, he attended both the Princeton Theological Seminary and the Yale Divinity School. On Nov. 28, 1838, he was ordained a Presbyterian minister. From 1839 until 1849 he was a pastor in Ridgebury, New York. Leaving the Empire State, he came to Illinois and took up residence in Knoxville. And here he was the local Presbyterian church's "Sabbath-school Missionary."

From W. Y.'s first marriage came four children. His eldest son, Henry Hornbeck, was born in 1843. At age 15 he was admitted to Knox College and was a student there from 1858 to 1860. The college lists him among the non-graduates for the Class of 1863. Having left school, Henry went to Chicago where he became "a member of the original company of Ellsworth Zouaves."

Before the Civil War it was common for communities to have militia companies. These organizations supplied a source of recreation and camaraderie for young men. The units paraded and performed at local gatherings, especially on the Fourth of July. Between events the members met and drilled.

In April 1859, 22-year-old Elmer Ellsworth took command of Chicago's nearly defunct "National Guard Cadets." By July 4 the renamed U.S. Zouave Cadets were ready for their first "exhibition drill" and became an instant sensation. Wearing "new and startling uniforms," the company performed "rapid movements" with a "brilliant and showy manual of arms and bayonet drill," thrilling spectators who had gathered in downtown Chicago. What separated Ellsworth's company from the others was that he led a "drill team" that emphasized "athleticism and group precision in both marching and marksmanship." Further setting his men apart was their dress. They were attired in flashy and distinctive uniforms that were copied from those worn by the French-Algerian regiments of the time. During the summer of 1860 Ellsworth and his men headed off on a 20-city tour of the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. In February 1896 Henry H. Miller wrote two lengthy articles recalling for the Chicago Tribune's readers the organization of Ellsworth's Zouaves and the famous tour.

Having become acquainted with Abraham Lincoln, Ellsworth left his Zouaves and in the fall of 1860 was accepted as a law student with the Springfield firm of Herndon and Lincoln. With Mr. Lincoln a candidate for president, "Ellsworth read very little law that autumn." He did, however, make a number of speeches "in the country towns about Springfield." With Lincoln's election Ellsworth was part of the party that accompanied Lincoln to Washington. With the outbreak of hostilities the President commissioned Ellsworth a lieutenant in the army. But Ellsworth gave up his commission when he was selected to be the colonel of the New York Fire Zouaves.

On May 24, 1861, a Union force occupied Alexandria, Virginia. Ellsworth's regiment led the way. For weeks a rebel flag had been seen flying from the top of the Marshall House, which Ellsworth saw as an affront. He impulsively ran to the hotel, bolted up to the cupola, and tore down the flag. The shotgun-toting owner confronted Ellsworth and fired both barrels, instantly killing him. Ellsworth had the distinction of being the first Union officer killed in the war. His body was taken back to the White House where it lay in state in the East Room.

Having left the Zouaves, Henry H. Miller returned to Knoxville and took a job as a bookkeeper. With the firing on Fort Sumter in April 1861 Miller was not among the Knox County men enlisting to put down the rebellion. However, when Lincoln called for additional volunteers to save the Union, he answered and was mustered into federal service on Sept. 2, 1862. Henry was one of 154 Knox Countians who became part of the 77th Illinois Volunteer Infantry. Twenty of these men were either graduates of, or like Henry, had attended Knox College.

The 77th was ordered to the front but saw no action until January 1863 when the regiment was part of Gen. McClernand's expedition to capture Fort Hindman near Arkansas Post. Here the 77th saw its initial combat and suffered its first casualties. When Grant finally moved on Vicksburg, the 77th took an active role in the campaign. Before the siege settled in, Union troops made 2 assaults on Vicksburg's defenses. The 77th was part of both charges, suffering 63 casualties on May 19 and 114 on May 22. Henry was slightly wounded in the head and knee.

In a letter to his sister, Sarah, he wrote of Vicksburg's surrender,

My Dear Sister:

Your letter I received several days before starting from Vicksburg and I had intended to have written before this, but our last days before that place were days of so much excitement that I could do little in the way of letter writing except to send a few lines to father telling of our glorious triumph and the fall of Vicksburg. Since that time I have had neither time nor opportunity.

On the morning of [July] 3rd our camp was much excited by the arrival in our lines of two rebel officers under a flag of truce, one of them General Bowen and the other Col Montgomery, Gen. Pemberton's chief of staff. They were led blindfolded to Gen. A. J. Smith's headquarters (our division commander).



Henry H. Miller is pictured in His Zouave uniform. This photo accompanied 1896 McClure's Magazine Story by John Hay. SUBMITTED PHOTO

Gen. Grant was sent for post haste. Evidently 'something was up' and conjectures as to the object of this visit were numerous, but the general impression seemed to be that they came to try and arrange some terms of capitulation. This proved to be true for they offered to surrender 'conditionally.' What their conditions were Gen. Grant did not wait to learn but replied — true to his reputation — 'nothing but unconditional surrender.' This they were not authorized to accept and it was agreed that the truce should continue all day — that Gen Grant and Gen. Pemberton should meet in the afternoon midway between our lines and those of the enemy. They met according to this agreement, each accompanied by their staffs — under a large tree.

Both the 'Rebs' and our own men seemed to enjoy the truce, and each party sat securely on his 'own pile of dirt' and chatted very pleasantly all the afternoon. Negotiations were pending until the morning of the 4th when the Stars and Stripes were run up on the court house of the Rebel stronghold and the air rang with the shouts of our army. To us it was a Fourth of July indeed — the great end for which so many of us had bled and died was accomplished and our soldiers were perfectly wild with enthusiasm.

These weekly essays, which run each Sunday, are provided by the Galesburg Civil War Round Table.

<http://www.galesburg.com/article/20150208/NEWS/150209787>

Print Page

Henry H. Miller, a prominent farmer and a member of the Zouave Corps, was born in 1843. At age 15 he was sent to the academy at West Point, where he became a member of the original company of the Zouave Corps. The Zouave Corps was a unit of the United States Army, known for its distinctive uniforms and drill. Miller was a member of the Zouave Corps during the Civil War, and he was known for his bravery and leadership. He was a member of the Zouave Corps during the Civil War, and he was known for his bravery and leadership. He was a member of the Zouave Corps during the Civil War, and he was known for his bravery and leadership.

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In a letter to the Zouave Corps, Miller wrote:

My Dear Sir,

Your letter received and I am glad to hear that you are well. I am well and hope this letter will find you the same. I am glad to hear that you are well. I am well and hope this letter will find you the same. I am glad to hear that you are well. I am well and hope this letter will find you the same.

On the 10th of the month, I received a letter from you. I am glad to hear that you are well. I am well and hope this letter will find you the same. I am glad to hear that you are well. I am well and hope this letter will find you the same.

WILLIAM Y. ^{Young}MILLER, '33,

was born in Montgomery, Orange County, N. Y., December 20, 1811. At graduation he delivered the Adelpic oration. After graduation at Princeton Seminary, he was pastor for eleven years of the Presbyterian Church at Ridgbury, N. Y.; then resigned through ill health and removed to Chicago and in '51 became pastor at Knoxville, Ill., for six years, being again disabled. Since 1882 he resided at San Jose, Cal. His political sentiments were Republican. He was made honorary Phi Beta Kappa. He died at San Jose of general debility, March 25, 1900; leaving a widow, three sons and four daughters.

*Henry
'99-1900*

*WILLIAM YOUNG MILLER (S 36-37) b. Montgomery, N. Y., Dec. 20, 11; B.A. Union Coll. 33, M.A.; Princeton T. S. 34-36; ord. (Ridgebury, N. Y.) Nov. 28, 38, where min. 38-48; Chicago, Ill. (res.) 49-51; Knoxville, Ill. (min.) 51-58; do. (res.) 58-82; San José, Calif. (do.) 83-00; d. there March 25, 00.
From: 8th Cat. of Yale Divinity School.

Miller, William Young—b. Montgomery, N. Y., Dec. 20, 1811; U. C., ~~1834~~ 1833
tea.; (2); New Hav. Sem.; ord. Pby. Hudson, Nov. 28, '38; p. Ridgebury, *Class*
N. Y., '39-49; s. s. Knoxville, Ill., '51-58; infirm, Knoxville, '58-82; Chi-
cago, Ill.; res. San José, Cal. *21900 Princeton shol Cat. 1894*

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WILLIAM Y. MILLER:

Had a son, H.H. Miller, 1102 Owings Bldg., Chicago, Ill.,
in 1896.

William Y. Miller was 85 years old Jan. 3, 1896. Presbyterian
Graduate Yale Divinity School (?)
Chicago pioneer. Went to San Jose in 1883.

Prof. Lamoroux-Notes.

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William Young Miller A.B. 1833

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William Young Miller F.B.